This listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application:

1   1.   (original): A system for direct presentment and payment of bills generated by

2   entities in a hierarchical business organization, the system using a computer that communicates

3   over a network, the system comprising:

4   a hierarchical business organization having a plurality of tiers of entities, said entities

5   related by a common business interest, said hierarchical business organization further including

6   at least two tiers each having at least one billing entity, each said billing entity in contractual

7   relation with a hiring entity in a superior tier of said business organization, said hierarchical

8   business organization further including a first tier having at least one paying entity,

9   one or more memories for storing entity information on each of said entities of said

10   hierarchical business organization,

11   one or more network interfaces for sending and receiving data to and from billing entity

12   nodes and paying entity nodes, and

13   one or more processors in communication with said one or more memories,

14   wherein, when said one or more network interfaces receives billing data for a billing

15   entity from one of said billing entity nodes, said one or more processors prepares a bill for said

16   billing entity based on said billing data, said bill for transmission to a paying entity node.

1   2.   (original): The system for direct presentment and payment of bills of claim 1,

1 further comprising:

2 said one or more memories for storing project information to identify said common

3 business interest.

1 3. (original): The system for direct presentment and payment of bills of claim 1,

2 further comprising:

3 said entity information including identifying information on said at least one paying

4 entity.

1 4. (original): The system for direct presentment and payment of bills of claim 1,

2 further comprising:

3 said bill further based on said stored entity information related to said billing entity.

1 5. (original): The system for direct presentment and payment of bills of claim 1,

2 further comprising:

3 said one or more processors generating payment remittance instructions related to said

4 bill for transmission to a paying entity node.

1 6. (original): The system for direct presentment and payment of bills of claim 1,

2 further comprising:

3 said billing information including a list of payments made to each billing entity,

4   wherein, when said one or more network interfaces receives said billing data, said one or

5   more processors verifies said billing data against said billing information.

1   7.   (original): The system for direct presentment and payment of bills of claim 1,

2   further comprising:

3   said billing information including a list of tasks performed by each billing entity,

4   wherein, when said one or more network interfaces receives said billing data, said one or

5   more processors verifies said billing data against said billing information.

1   8.   (original): The system for direct presentment and payment of bills of claim 1,

2   further comprising:

3   said bill identifying a retention amount to be withheld from payment pursuant to said

4   payment remittance instructions.

1   9.   (original): The system of claim 1, wherein:

2   said entity information includes a list of tasks, each said task associated with one of said

3   billing entities, each said task further provided to said common business interest by only said one

4   billing entity.

1   10.   (original): The system of claim 9, wherein:

2   said bill for said billing entity includes only those tasks associated with said billing entity.

1   11. (original): The system of claim 1, further comprising:

2   said entity information having a list of tasks, each said task associated with one of said

3   billing entities, said task provided to said common business interest by only said one billing

4   entity, and said entity information further having a list of stored costs, each said stored cost

5   associated with one of said tasks.

1   12. (original): The system for direct presentment and payment of bills of claim 9,

2   wherein:

3   said one or more processors compares said list of tasks for each of said billing entities of

4   said hierarchical business organization and identifies any task duplicated by more than one of

5   said billing entities.

1   13. (original): The system for direct presentment and payment of bills of claim 9,

2   wherein:

3   each said billing data identifies at least one of said tasks of said list of tasks as a

4   performed task for billing, and said one or more processors compares a billed cost submitted by

5   said billing entity for said performed task against said cost associated with said task in said

6   billing information to verify a match.

1   14. (original): The system for direct presentment and payment of bills of claim 11,

2   wherein:

3   said one or more processors compares said list of tasks for each of said billing entities of

4   said hierarchical business organization and identifies redundant performance of any task of said

5   list of tasks by more than one of said billing entities.

1   15. (original): The system for direct presentment and payment of bills of claim 11,

2   wherein:

3   said billing data identifies at least one of said tasks of said list of tasks as a performed

4   task for billing, and said one or more processors compares a billed cost submitted by said billing

5   entity associated with said performed task against said stored cost associated with said task in

6   said billing information to verify a match.

1   16. (original): The system of claim 1, wherein:

2   said payment remittance instructions are transmitted to said paying entity node.

1   17. (original): The system of claim 1, further comprising:

2   a printer in communication with said one or more processors,

3   when said one or more processors generates said payment remittance instructions, said

4   one or more processors instructs said printer to print a check for payment of said bill.

1   18. (original): The system of claim 1, wherein:

6

2 when said payment remittance instructions are generated, said one or more processors

3 submit instructions to a bank entity node to pay said billing entity.

1 19. (original): The system of claim 1, wherein:

2 said one or more memories comprises a data set for storing information for identification

3 of said common business interest.

1 20. (original): The system of claim 1, wherein:

2 said one or more memories comprises a data set for storing identifying information on

3 billing entities.

1 21. (original): The system of claim 1, wherein:

2 id one or more memories comprises a data set for storing identifying information on paying

3 entities.

1 22. (original): The system of claim 1, wherein:

2 said one or more memories comprises a data set for storing identifying information on

3 authorizing entities.

1 23. (original): The system of claim 1, wherein:

2 said first tier payment entity is a construction project owner.

7

1   24.   (original): The system of claim 1, wherein:

2   said first tier paying entity is a building contractor.

1   25.   (original): The system of claim 1, wherein:

2   said first tier paying entity is a financial institution.

1   26.   (original): The system of claim 1, further comprising:

2   one or more authorizing entity nodes, and

3   said one or more network interfaces are further for sending and receiving data to and from

4   said authorizing entity nodes,

5   wherein, when said one or more network interfaces receives said billing data, said one or

6   more processors generates and submits to at least one of said authorizing entity nodes an

7   authorization request for payment of said bill, and

8   wherein, when said one or more network interfaces receives an approval or correction

9   report from said authorizing entity node responsive to said authorization request, said one or

10   more processors prepares said bid.

1   27.   (original): The system of claim 26, wherein:

2   when said approval or correction report comprises a correction request, said one or more

3   processors submits that correction request to said billing entity node for correction of said bill.

1 28. (original): The system of claim 26, wherein:

2 when said approval or correction report comprises an approval, said one or more

3 processors generates said payment remittance instructions.

1 29. (original): The system of claim 26, wherein:

2 said authorization request comprises a list of at least one tasks, each said task associated

3 with one of said billing entities, and said task provided to said common business interest by said

4 billing entity.

1 30. (original): The system of claim 29, wherein:

2 said approval or correction report includes a report for verifying completion of each said

3 item of value of each said task.

1 31. (original): The system of claim 1, further comprising:

2 said one or more memories including a data set for storing claim information on each of

3 said billing entities, and

4 wherein, when said one or more network interfaces receives a claim release from one of

5 said billing entity nodes for one of said billing entities, said one or more processors generates a

6 claims release report for transmission to said paying entity node, said claims release report

7 including claim information related to said billing entity.

1   32. (original): The system of claim 31, wherein:

2   said claim release comprises an unconditional claims release.

1   33. (original): The system of claim 31, wherein:

2   said claim release comprises a final claim release.

1   34. (original): The system of claim 1, further comprising:

2   said one or more memories further for maintaining claim information on each of said

3   billing entities,

4   one or more authorizing entity nodes, and

5   said one or more network interfaces further for sending and receiving data to and from

6   said one or more authorizing entity nodes,

7   wherein, when said one or more network interfaces receives said billing data, said one or

8   more processors generates and submits to at least one of said authorizing entity nodes an

9   authorization request for payment of said bill, and

10   wherein, when said one or more network interfaces receives an approval from said

11   authorizing entity node responsive to said authorization request, said one or more processors

12   submits a request for a claim release to said billing entity node consistent with said approval, said

13   a claim release further consistent with said claim information related to said billing entity.

1   35.   (original):   The system of claim 34, wherein:

2   when said one or more network interfaces receives a correction request from said

3   authorizing entity node responsive to said authorization request, said one or more processors

4   submits said correction request to said billing entity node for correction of said bill.

1   36.   (original):   The system for direct presentment and payment of bills of claim 1,

2   wherein:

3   when said one or more processor receives a request for a billing report from one of said

4   paying entity nodes, said one or more processors creates that report for submission to said paying

5   entity node.

1   37.   (original):   The system for direct presentment and payment of bills of claim 36,

2   wherein:

3   said billing report comprises a billing status for each said billing entity of said

4   hierarchical business organization.

1   38.   (original):   The system for direct presentment and payment of bills of claim 36,

2   wherein:

3   said billing report comprises a total billing status for all said billing entities of said

4   hierarchical business organization.

1   39. (original): The system for direct presentment and payment of bills of claim 1,

2   further comprising:

3   a user interface associated with a billing entity, said user interface in communication with

4   one of said billing entity nodes, wherein

5   said one or more processors prepares a billing template for input of said billing data by

6   said billing entity.

1   40. (original): The system for direct presentment and payment of bills of claim 39,

2   wherein:

3   said billing template comprises a billing status for said billing entity.

1   41. (original): The system for direct presentment and payment of bills of claim 1,

2   further comprising:

3   said billing data including a billed total amount,

4   said bill having a discounted bill total amount for presentation to said paying entity, said

5   one or more processors calculating said discounted bill total amount by subtracting from said

6   billed total amount a discount amount.

1   42. (original): The system for direct presentment and payment of bills of claim 1,

2   wherein:

3   when said one or more processor receives a request for a billing report from one of said

12

4   paying entity nodes, said one or more processors creates that report for submission to said paying

5   entity node.

1   43.   (original): The system for direct presentment and payment of bills of claim 42,

2   wherein:

3   said billing report comprises a billing status for each said billing entity of said

4   hierarchical business organization.

1   44.   (original): The system for direct presentment and payment of bills of claim 42,

2   wherein:

3   said billing report comprises a total billing status for all said billing entities of said

4   hierarchical business organization.

1   45.   (original): The system for direct presentment and payment of bills of claim 1,

2   further comprising:

3   a user interface for a billing entity, said user interface in communication with one of said

4   billing entity nodes, and

5   said one or more processors prepares a billing template for input of said billing data by

6   said billing entity.

1   46.   (original): The system for direct presentment and payment of bills of claim 45,

2   wherein:

3   said billing template comprises a billing status for said billing entity.

1   47.   (original): The system for direct presentment and payment of bills of claim 1,

2   wherein:

3   said one or more processors calculates a discount amount for said bill, and said bill

4   identifies said discount amount for reduction of a bill total amount.

1   48.   (original): A method for direct presentment and payment of bills generated in a

2   hierarchical business organization, using a computer that communicates over a network, the

3   method comprising:

4   storing entity information on each of a plurality of entities of a hierarchical business

5   organization having a plurality of tiers of entities, said entities related by a common business

6   interest, said entities comprising a plurality of billing entities, each said billing entity in

7   contractual relation with a hiring entity in a superior tier of said business organization, said

8   hierarchical business organization having at least two tiers each having at least one billing entity,

9   said hierarchical business organization further having at least one tier having at least one paying

10   entity,

11   receiving billing data from at least one of said billing entities, and

12   preparing a bill for said billing entity based on said billing data, said bill further based on

13   said stored entity information related to said billing entity.

14

1   49. (original): The method for direct presentment and payment of bills of claim 48,

2   further comprising:

3   generating payment remittance instructions for transmission to a paying entity, said

4   payment remittance instructions for payment of said bill to said billing entity.

1   50. (original): The method for direct presentment and payment of bills of claim 48,

2   further comprising:

3   verifying said billing data against a list of payments made to each billing entity stored in

4   said billing information, and

5   verifying said billing data against a list of tasks performed by each billing entity stored in

6   said billing information.

1   51. (original): The method for direct presentment and payment of bills of claim 48,

2   further comprising:

3   identifying a retention amount on said bill, said retention amount to be withheld from

4   payment pursuant to said payment remittance instructions.

1   52. (original): The method of claim 48, further comprising:

2   storing in said entity information a list of tasks, each said task associated with one of said

3   billing entities, and

4   including an item of value in said task provided to said common business interest by only

5   said one billing entity.

1   53. (original): The method of claim 52, further comprising:

2   including in said bill only said items of value for those tasks associated with said billing

3   entity.

1   54. (original): The method of claim 48, further comprising:

2   associating each task in a list of tasks with one of said billing entities,

3   including in said task an item of value provided to said common business interest by only

4   said billing entity, and

5   associating each said stored cost in a list of stored costs with one of said tasks.

1   55. (original): The method of claim 54, further comprising:

2   identifying any task of said list of tasks for all said billing entities of said hierarchical

3   business organizations for duplicate performance by more than one of said billing entities.

1   56. (original): The method for direct presentment and payment of bills of claim 54,

2   further comprising:

3   identifying in said billing data at least one of said tasks of said list of tasks as being

4   completed,

16

5 comparing a submitted cost presented by said billing entity associated with said task

6 against said stored cost associated with said task in said billing information to verify a match.

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1 A¹ 57. (currently amended): The method for direct presentment and payment of bills of

2 claim ~~1~~ 49, further comprising:

3 submitting said payment instructions to said paying entity.

1 58. (currently amended): The method for direct presentment and payment of bills of

2 claim ~~1~~ 49, further comprising:

3 instructing a printer to print a check for payment of said bill in compliance with said

4 payment remittance instructions.

1 59. (currently amended): The method for direct presentment and payment of bills of

2 claim ~~1~~ 49, further comprising:

·3 communicating instructions over a network to a bank to pay said billing entity according

4 to said payment remittance instructions.

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1 60. (original): The method for direct presentment and payment of bills of claim 48,

2 further comprising:

3 identifying a project in a data set stored in said one or more memories.

17

1   61. (original): The method for direct presentment and payment of bills of claim 48,

2   further comprising:

3   identifying billing entities and paying entities in a data set stored in said one or more

4   memories.

1   62. (original): The method for direct presentment and payment of bills of claim 48,

2   further comprising:

3   identifying one or more authorizing entities in a data set stored in said one or more

4   memories.

1   63. (original): The method for direct presentment and payment of bills of claim 48,

2   further comprising:

3   generating and submitting to at least one of one or more authorizing entities an

4   authorization request for payment of said bill,

5   receiving an approval or correction report from said authorizing entity responsive to said

6   authorization request, and

7   generating said payment remittance instructions.

1   64. (original): The method for direct presentment and payment of bills of claim 63,

2   further comprising:

3   receiving a correction request from said authorizing entity responsive to said

18

4   authorization request, and

5   submitting that correction request to said billing entity for correction of said bill.

1   65.   (original): The method for direct presentment and payment of bills of claim 63,

2   further comprising:

3   receiving an approval from said authorizing entity responsive to said authorization

4   request, and

5   generating said payment remittance instructions.

1   66.   (original): The method for direct presentment and payment of bills of claim 63,

2   further comprising:

3   associating each task of a list of at least one tasks with one of said billing entities, said

4   task provided to said common business interest by said billing entity, and

5   including said list of at least one task in said authorization request.

1   67.   (original): The method for direct presentment and payment of bills of claim 66,

2   further comprising:

3   assigning inspection authority to at least one authorizing entity,

4   conducting an inspection for completion of said list of tasks, and

5   preparing an approval or correction report.

19

1   68. (original): The method for direct presentment and payment of bills of claim 67,

2   further comprising:

3   verifying completion of each said task.

1   69. (original): The method for direct presentment and payment of bills of claim 68,

2   further comprising:

3   preparing an approval or correction report, including completion verification information

4   on said tasks.

1   70. (original): The method for direct presentment and payment of bills of claim 48,

2   further comprising:

3   storing claim information on each of said entities in a data set in said one or more

4   memories,

5   receiving a claim release from one of said billing entities,

6   generating a claims release report for transmitting to said paying entity, and

7   including in said claims release report claim information related to said billing entity.

1   71. (original): The method for direct presentment and payment of bills of claim 70,

2   further comprising:

3   preparing an unconditional claims release.

1   72. (original): The method for direct presentment and payment of bills of claim 70,

2   further comprising: ·

3   preparing an final claims release.

1   73. (original): The method for direct presentment and payment of bills of claim 48,

2   further comprising:

3   storing claim information on each of said billing entities,

4   generating and submitting to at least one authorizing entity an authorization request for

5   payment of said bill in response to receipt of said billing data from said billing entity,

6   receiving an approval from said authorizing entity responsive to said authorization

7   request, and

8   submitting a request for a claim release to said billing entity consistent with said

9   approval, said claim release further consistent with said claim information related to said billing

10   entity.

1   74. (original): The method for direct presentment and payment of bills of claim 73,

2   further comprising:

3   receiving a correction request from said authorizing entity, and

4   submitting said correction request to said billing entity for correction of said bill.

1   75. (original): The method for direct presentment and payment of bills of claim 48,

2   further comprising:

3   receiving a request for a billing report from one of said paying entities,

4   creating that report, and

5   submitting that report to said paying entity.

1   76. (original): The method for direct presentment and payment of bills of claim 74,

2   further comprising:

3   including in said billing a reported billing status for each said billing entity of said

4   hierarchical business organization.

1   77. (original): The method for direct presentment and payment of bills of claim 75,

2   further comprising:

3   including in said billing report a total billing status for all said billing entities of said

4   hierarchical business organization.

1   78. (original): The method for direct presentment and payment of bills of claim 48,

2   further comprising:

3   preparing a billing template for input of billing data by a billing entity, and

4   transmitting said billing template to a user interface over a network, said user interface

5   associated with said billing entity.

1   79. (original): The method for direct presentment and payment of bills of claim 78,

2   further comprising:

3   including a billing status for said billing entity in said billing template.

1   80. (original): The method for direct presentment and payment of bills of claim 48,

2   further comprising:

3   calculating a discount amount, and

4   calculating a discounted bill total amount for presentation to said paying entity by

5   subtracting from a billed total amount said discount amount, said billed total amount included in

6   said billing data.

1   81. (original): A system for direct presentment and payment of bills generated by

2   entities in a hierarchical business organization, the system using a computer that communicates

3   over a network, the system comprising:

4   a hierarchical business organization having a plurality of tiers of entities, said entities

5   related by a common business interest, said hierarchical business organization further including

6   at least two tiers each having at least one billing entity, each said billing entity in contractual

7   relation with a hiring entity in a superior tier of said business organization, said hierarchical

8   business organization including a first tier having at least one paying entity, and said hierarchical

9   business organization further including at least one tier having at least one authorizing entity,

10   one or more memories for storing entity information on each of said entities of said

23

11   hierarchical business organization,

12   one or more processors in communication with said one or more memories, and

13   one or more network interfaces for sending and receiving data to and from billing entity

14   nodes, paying entity nodes, and authorizing entity nodes,

15   wherein, when said one or more network interfaces receives billing data for a billing

16   entity from one of said billing entity nodes, said one or more processors generates and submits to

17   at least one of said authorizing entity nodes an authorization request for authorization to pay said

18   bill, and

19   wherein, when said one or more network interfaces receives an approval or correction

20   report from said authorizing entity node responsive to said authorization request, said one or

21   more processors prepares a bill for said billing entity based on said billing data, said bill for

22   transmission to a paying entity node.

1   82.   (original): The system of claim 81, wherein:

2   when said approval or correction report comprises a correction request, said one or more

3   processors submits that correction request to said billing entity node for correction of said bill.

1   83.   (original): The system of claim 81, wherein:

2   when said approval or correction report comprises an approval, said one or more

3   processors generates said payment remittance instructions.

1   84. (original): The system of claim 81, wherein:

2   said authorization request comprises a list of at least one tasks, each said task associated

3   with one of said billing entities, and said task provided to said common business interest by said

4   billing entity.

1   85. (original): The system of claim 84, wherein:

2   said approval or correction report includes a report for verifying completion of each said

3   item of value of each said task.

1   86. (original): A system for direct presentment and payment of bills generated by

2   entities in a hierarchical business organization, the system using a computer that communicates

3   over a network, the system comprising:

4   a hierarchical business organization having a plurality of tiers of entities, said entities

5   related by a common business interest, said hierarchical business organization further including

6   at least two tiers each having at least one billing entity, each said billing entity in contractual

7   relation with a hiring entity in a superior tier of said business organization, said hierarchical

8   business organization further including a first tier having at least one paying entity,

9   said one or more memories including a data set for storing claim information on each of

10   said billing entities,

11   one or more network interfaces for sending and receiving data to and from billing entity

12   nodes and paying entity nodes, and

13   one or more processors in communication with said one or more memories,

14   wherein, when said one or more network interfaces receives a claim release from one of

15   said billing entity nodes for one of said billing entities, said one or more processors generates a

16   claims release report for transmission to said paying entity node, said claims release report

17   including claim information related to said billing entity.

1   87.   (original): The system of claim 86, wherein:

2   one or more memories further for storing entity information on each of said entities of

3   said hierarchical business organization,

4   when said one or more network interfaces receives billing data for a billing entity from

5   one of said billing entity nodes, said one or more processors generates a claim release for

6   transmission to said billing entity node, and

7   when said one or more network interfaces receives said claim release from said billing

8   entity, said one or more processors prepares a bill for said billing entity based on said billing

9   data, said bill for transmission to a paying entity node, said bill including entity information

10   related to said billing entity.

1   88.   (original): A computer program product comprising a machine readable medium on

2   which is provided program instructions for performing a method for direct presentment and

3   payment of bills generated in a hierarchical business organization using a computer that

4   communicates over a network, the program instructions comprising:

5   program code for storing entity information on each of a plurality of entities of a

6   hierarchical business organization having a plurality of tiers of entities, said entities related by a

7   common business interest, said entities comprising a plurality of billing entities, each said billing

8   entity in contractual relation with a hiring entity in a superior tier of said business organization,

9   said hierarchical business organization having at least two tiers each having at least one billing

10   entity, said hierarchical business organization further having at least one tier having at least one

11   paying entity,

12   receiving billing data from at least one of said billing entities, and

13   program code for preparing a bill for said billing entity based on said billing data, said bill

14   further based on said stored entity information related to said billing entity.

1   89. (original): The computer program product of claim 88, further comprising:

2   program code for generating payment remittance instructions for transmission to a paying

3   entity, said payment remittance instructions for payment of said bill to said billing entity.

1   90. (original): The system of claim 42, wherein:

2   said billing report comprises a billing status on a plurality of said billing entities.

1   91. (original): The system of claim 1, wherein:

2   said one or more processors calculates a fee amount for said bill, and said bill identifies

3   said fee amount for inclusion in a billed total amount.